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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Mushroom Dishes." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, USDA.

--ooOoo--

A friend of mine just back from abroad was telling me the other day about the mushroom city under Paris. He says that the most famous mushroom producing center in the world is this subterranean city lying far below the city of Paris. It has a complete ventilating system and eight miles of lighted streets lined with mushroom beds and the homes of people who cultivate and ship them.

The French, you know, have been enthusiastic mushroom eaters for generations. In fact, they began to cultivate these small edible fungi way back in the seventeenth century. And long before that, the poor people treasured the mushrooms that grew wild in the fields. Many people, both on the Continent and in England, found mushroom-growing so cheap and easy that this little white button-like food came to be called "the poor man's meat."

As a matter of fact, the food value of the mushroom isn't comparable to meat at all. If you had to depend on mushrooms entirely, for your protein and iron, say, you wouldn't get on very well. But you can cook mushrooms so they taste a good deal like meat and they will make a brown sauce that resembles meat gravy. The mushroom's chief claim to fame, then, is its flavor and perhaps also its appearance. No doubt, its flavor accounts for its popularity with the French. But the mushroom could never be called a necessity food nor one that has a place on a very low-cost diet. When the price of mushrooms is high in the market, they're certainly a luxury food. But at this season they're quite inexpensive in many places.

A young housewife I know who lives in New York City says that at about this time of year great trucks come rolling in town filled with mushrooms grown in eastern Pennsylvania -- the largest center of mushroom raising in this country. Not long ago she bought a pound of fresh mushrooms in the market for a very moderate figure. Now mushrooms are light in weight; a pound of them will go quite a long way; and you can use them in a great many delicious dishes.

Housewives living on farms or other places where they can gather wild mushrooms in the summer often can or dry them and have a supply on the pantry shelf for winter use. The mushroom which the scientists call by a long Latin name, "agaricus campestris," is the most common. It is the only species grown commercially and it also grows wild in summer in the woods and in pastures.



Well, when you bring mushrooms into your kitchen, you should treat them as you do other fresh foods. Use them as fresh as possible to keep the best flavor, and keep them in the refrigerator during the time they have to wait.

When it comes to cooking, the important point to remember is not to over-cook mushrooms. Their flesh is delicate. Quick cooking is all they need usually. They're much like oysters in this matter of cooking and you prepare them in many of the same ways -- for example, you can fry them, broil them, cream them, use them in stuffing and in scalloped dishes.

Of course, before you cook mushrooms, you wash them and skin the caps, and you often remove the stems, because they are less tender so take longer to cook. But, of course, you don't discard those stems. You save them to chop up and use in soups and sauces.

Haven't you noticed that people who appreciate mushrooms, who know how to prepare and serve them to perfection, often fix them in the most simple ways with the most simple seasoning -- just salt, pepper, and butter, say? They try to feature the delicate flavor of the mushroom, you see, rather than cover it up with stronger flavors. Creamed mushrooms, plain broiled mushrooms, scalloped mushrooms, chicken a la king and mushrooms, and mushroom soup are all examples of simple delicious dishes simply seasoned. Sometimes just a trace of onion is good in these combinations.

Then, we have other recipes in which the mushroom is used to add or blend with several other flavors. An example of this is mushroom stuffing. I'm glad I happened to mention that stuffing, since Thanksgiving is just around the corner. I think you might like to take down the recipe today and use it for your holiday bird. Mushroom stuffing is good with turkey, duck, or chicken.

Would you like to jot down the six ingredients for mushroom stuffing? I'm going to give you proportions to stuff a chicken. For a turkey, of course, you'll need more. Here are the ingredients:

- 1/2 cup of chopped mushrooms
- 6 tablespoons of butter or other fat
- 3 cups of dry bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of thyme, and
- 1 teaspoon of chopped of chopped parsley.

Once more. (REPEAT)

Cook the mushrooms in the butter for a few minutes to bring out the flavor. Then add the other ingredients in the order given. That's all there is to making the stuffing.

Now for a Friday menu featuring mushrooms: Broiled mushrooms on toast; Crisp bacon; Broccoli with Hollandaise sauce; Pineapple and cheese salad; for dessert, Coffee ring with Hot Coffee.

